

Oral participation practices in classroom among university students in Afghanistan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at exploring factors affecting classroom participation among students in the English department of Laghman University, Afghanistan. More precisely, this research discovered factors related to teachers and class-size that hinder students' practice of oral participation in the classroom. In collecting the data, this study employed mixed-method research with concurrent design. An adapted questionnaire and a semi-structured interview have been used as the data collection instrument of this study. An online survey questionnaire was conducted with 110 respondents. In addition, a semi-structured interview was conducted with five of the respondents at the English Department of Laghman University. The data from the questionnaire was descriptively analyzed through using statistical package for social science (SPSS), and the semi-structured interview data were thematically analyzed and interpreted. The findings revealed that class-size related factor is the first influential factor in affecting oral participation among students and it is due to having large number students in a class. Teacher's related factor is the second influential factor that affects the oral participation of students. Majority claimed that teachers' approach, behavior, and qualification have prominent impact on their level of oral participation. Based on the finding, it can be seen that class-size related, and teachers' factors affected oral participation of the students at the English Department of Laghman University. It is recommended that the Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan strive to decrease the number of students in each class and enforce teachers in implementing a student-centered learning approach while teaching.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Classroom participation provides several benefits to the students when involved in the classroom activities. Students are provided with numerous of advances when engaged in classroom activities, for example, they can revitalize their self-confidence; interest, critical, analytical, communicative, interpretative, synthesis skills, and freedom culture throughout their entire life [1]–[4]. Participation spurs students' collaboration, social interaction, the inspiration for team-work, and the amelioration of individual improvement in the classroom [5]. Indeed, classroom participation plays a considerable role in improving the teaching and learning process [6].

There are students in the classroom that avoid oral participation and stay silent in each period of the class. According to Schmitt [7], students who decline to take part in the mentioned activities are considered to be passive students. Participation is counted as being alert on events, answering the questions, and engaging in group discussion. Therefore, in Afghanistan itself, classroom participation has been seen as a significant need because it is the most influential aspect of enriching students' academic performance.

One of the main objectives of the Ministry of Higher Education in Afghanistan is to initiate and implement the English language as a medium of instruction in the higher education system. Ministry of Higher Education asks students to attend and acquire the English language for advanced and improved classes and boost the status of the current educational system in schools, colleges, and universities. Despite this, Ministry of Higher Education does not have a strong system to make English as a medium of instruction for different reasons. Ministry of Higher Education has neglected to enforce the rules and regulations of reward and punishing teachers. Therefore, students' competency in the English language is low. In addition, there are no requirements for passing a standardized English language test in admitting to the English language departments at the university level in Afghanistan. Students believe that they will be improved in the classroom. Unfortunately, they do not acquire English language skills with high quality. Still, such a system from Ministry of Higher Education has resulted in students lacking self-confidence, losing interests in content subjects, and hopelessness of getting a job after graduation. In such situations students' oral participation might cause, which may cause students to be low in oral participation. Thus, this research aimed at explore teacher's related, and class-size factors that affect English majored students at the Laghman University, Afghanistan.

Oral participation of students may be affected through different factors, for example, language problems, socio-cultural, textbooks, faculty members, class atmosphere, and ethnicity. In line with this, previous researches indicated that teachers, student readiness, linguistics, environmental, and language barrier are the problems which can affect student's oral participation [8], [9]. Thus, this research attempts to examine teacher-related and class-size related factors that affect the level and practices of oral participation among university students in Afghanistan.

Teachers and students have strong educational and social bound with each other and can be affective of one another in terms of oral participation. Teachers may affect the oral participation of students for different reasons, for example, expectancy, enthusiasm, methodology, fluency, and behaviors. In addition, revealed expectation of teachers from students, motivation, authoritative teachers, and the choice of pedagogy, behavior and high competency on the language are the most influential factors affecting oral participation of students [10], [11].

Firstly, engaging students in different classroom activities is challenging for teachers. Also, students' oral participation may be affected when teachers are overestimating their students, and teachers may not motivate them toward verbal engagement. However, preparing students for oral participation is a challenging process for teachers. While teachers expect their students to utilize target language from the day, they started learning a language [12]. In such a situation, the teacher's role is to choose an alternative method of teaching and learning the language. Besides, to make the language classroom more interactive, the teacher should ask questions in the target language continuously in order to engage students in the classroom [12]. Regarding student motivation, Carless [13] stated that teaching English as a foreign language, and teachers are required to spur their students to speak up in the classroom. Learners have very few opportunities of speaking in the classroom, which is challenging to impact learners' participation in such an environment.

Secondly, the traditional way of teaching is the most influential factor, where the teacher is concerned to be the dominant of the classroom and possess different characteristics of reformer and time manager. In fact, there are teachers who are the controller and dominant of the classroom in which they have characteristics of reformers, judges, and leaders that may affect oral participation. Such teachers are associated with the qualities of creators, correctors, mediators, and mentors that cause students to be passive in the classroom activities, including discussion, questioning, presentation, commenting, and many more [14]. In addition, teachers who avoid giving time to academic tasks but rather attempt to arrange their classroom atmosphere effectively by utilizing a group management approach (GMA) to affect students' oral participation [15].

Thirdly, the most trending factors related to teachers affecting oral participation, is the teaching methodology used when teaching and learning. noted that students' participation is low when teachers use the teacher-centered learning (TCL) approach. Moreover, there are still some teachers who do not pay attention to the learning performance of students [16]. Teachers avoid giving homework and accommodate different learning activities, and they do not recognize the student's overall academic achievement. Consequently, students become demotivated and avoid interaction in the classroom [11]. Furthermore, research conducted in Hong Kong on 38 learners to find out the pedagogical problems. It was revealed that making learners speak was one of the most problematic parts of student participation in the class [17].

Next, teacher behavior is conserved as one of the factors that affect students' oral participation in the class. Teachers who are friendly in the classroom can boost oral participation and provide self-confidence in students. Previous study [18] asserted that instructors, who are more flexible and uses a communicative approach are more understandable, friendly, and modeling as a facilitator in the classroom. Classroom participation is more interesting when the teacher's personality is friendly and encouraging when teaching the students. At the same time, teachers who behave more strictly can negatively affect the level of oral participation [10]. Whenever teachers negatively evaluate, criticize, and ignore students causes them to be passive in the classroom. Furthermore, such situation may harm students' self-confidence degree, implanting panic in learners, and minimal participation happens in the classroom [19]. Moreover, bold faces and unfriendly behavior of the instructors cause students to be passive in the class [20].

In this study, class-size is also one of the essential factors affecting the practice of oral participation among students. This section focusses on the benefits of small classroom compared to the large, ideal class, and the theory that underpins class-size. The classroom room is a place in which students are studying in it for a more extended time. Students frequently observe and experience different types of students, teachers, beliefs, and traditions in the classroom. Previous researchers [21] defined a classroom as a learning space, a room in which students learn. Classrooms are found in educational institutions of all kinds, ranging from preschools to universities. They may also be found in other places where education or training is provided, such as corporations and religious and humanitarian organizations. The classroom provides a space where learning can take place uninterrupted by outside distractions.

Small classes are beneficial for language learning learners. Small classes provide students with enough opportunities to enhance their academic performance. According to Butt *et al.* [22], most of the students do better in smaller classes than in larger classes. Smaller class sizes provide the opportunity for personal attention and additional instructional help when necessary. Yet, whether smaller class sizes boost academic achievement has been examined in numerous studies with mixed results. This article examines how class size affects academic performance, where smaller class sizes can have the greatest impact, and how some critics question the benefits and cost-effectiveness of class size reduction. In addition, Students with low numbers in the classroom can enhance their communication, group work, discussion, and share their ideas and thought compared to the large classroom. Also, Howard and Henney [23] revealed in their research that there would be very low 'hiding' in small classes compared to the large types; large class sizes prone to hinder participation class size should be more extrapolative of communication than gender.

In addition, pedagogical approaches of teachers might be affected in the large or crowded classes, and 21st century teaching and learning skills are also inapplicable. In large classes, traditional teaching often happens, which means fewer interaction chances are provided for learners. It might be possible that the perception of being in a larger class can discourage interaction, for instance, a classroom of 30 learners at university level can be small, and it can be understood as a big class by learners of another university [24], [25]. In large classes, the traditional way of teaching can be dominant. Therefore, teachers should find an alternative teaching method to enhance oral participation among students [26]. It is obvious that students who are studying social sciences prefer to communicate and interact in the classroom. Learners prefer to ask questions in social science such as art classes rather than natural sciences classes. Indeed, they prefer to communicate in social science classes for a more extended period than natural sciences classes [27], [28].

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was based on a mixed method research design. An online survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used to gather data from the respondents. They were the main data collection tools of this study, and aim to answer the specified research objectives and research questions of this study.

2.1. Research procedure

Based on the design of the study, the online survey questionnaire was distributed via WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger to the students at the English Department of Laghman University to gather quantitative data. Aftermath, five of the four classes (first, second, third, and fourth year) were interviewed to collect in-depth data for the questionnaire. After collecting both quantitative and qualitative, at first, stage, quantitative data was analyzed and interpreted. In the second stage, qualitative data was thematically analyzed using manual technique, then compared, interpreted, and discussed as the supporting section of quantitative data.

2.2. Participants in the research

Convenient and purposive sampling techniques were employed to select respondents from four different classes. For the quantitative study, participants have been chosen conveniently from four classes (freshmen, sophomore, junior, and senior) of the English Department at the Laghman University of Afghanistan. There were 200 respondents conveniently selected to participate on the online survey

questionnaire to fulfil objectives one and two. All of the respondents were required to fill up the questionnaire to gain data for the practice of oral participation. There were 110 respondents answered the online questionnaire successfully. After collecting data from the online survey, a semi-structured interview was conducted on five of the respondents who already contributed to the questionnaire. The interview was aimed to gather in-depth data for the quantitative data.

2.3. Research instruments

An online questionnaire was used to gather quantitative information from the respondents. Actually, a questionnaire is a method of collecting data for quantitative research. The purpose of entails different categories of questionnaires assist research in gathering required data from the respondents [29]. In order to collect responses to the factors affecting oral participation, a questionnaire was adapted and used from different questionnaires used in the previous studies. The questionnaire developed consisting of three sections A, B, and C. Section A comprises of demographic data of the participants, section B comprises of the level of classroom participation, and section C comprises of factors affecting classroom participation which also contains two sub-sections: i) For teacher-related; and ii) For class-size related factors that affect classroom participation.

The reliability test have to be employed through the Cronbach's alpha to confirm the reliability and consistency of the questionnaire [30]. In this study, to determine the reliability of the survey instrument is via Cronbach's alpha. The selected reliability coefficient was above 0.70, which high reliable. In most social science research applications, this level or higher had been considered as "acceptable". The nearer the value to 1.0, the more reliable is the instrument [31]. Furthermore, the reliability test is utilized for all ranking scales to gain the Cronbach's alpha to confirm internal consistency, and a test can be more consistent to the degree that it measures whatever it is measuring [30].

A semi-structured interview was utilized to gather detailed insights and ideas from the respondents to support the quantitative data of this study. The purpose of the interview is to collect in-depth data from the respondents to support the quantitative data. In this study, a semi-structured interview is consisting of 12 closed-ended and open-ended questions adapted from the previous reliable and valid researches [32]–[34]. Furthermore, Yazan [35] said that a semi-structured interview is comprised of sequences of statements and questions that obtain appropriate responses from the participants through which compared and contrasted information and ideas can be obtained.

Qualitative research is a cooperative attempt and comprehensions of current phenomena in which the scholar themselves are the main tool of data gathering and data analysis [36]. In addition, the validity of qualitative data depended on the scholar's argument about the level of participants who responded to the actuality of being studied [37]. The validity and reliability of the interview tool govern the scholar's ability or their skills in the interview. The validity of the interview tool is not only limited to the results but to the research process [38]. However, for the validity of the questionnaire used in the study, the questions were reviewed by the researcher's supervisor, who is a senior lecturer at the Language Academy of Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM).

2.4. Data analysis

In this study, questionnaire and semi-structured data were sequentially analyzed. First, the researcher analyzed the quantitative data and then the qualitative data. Data analysis is a procedure that utilizes statistical and logical techniques to elaborate, precise, summarize, and evaluate information [30]. To be more specific, online survey questionnaire data (quantitative) was descriptively analyzed through using percentages, and means, while semi-structured interview data (qualitative) was thematically analyzed. The aim of qualitative data was to support the data from the questionnaire. Furthermore, Table 1 describes the score interpretation, which has been divided into three categories: low, medium, and high.

Table 1. Score interpretation

Mean score level	Level
1.00–2.33	Low
2.34–3.66	Average
3.67–5.00	High

3. RESULTS

This research explored the factors affecting oral participation which are teacher-related and class-size related factors among students. Quantitative data from the questionnaire were descriptively analyzed and interpreted through using statistical package software for social science (SPSS) version 24 in percentage, and

means. At the same time, semi-structured interviews that represented qualitative data were thematically analyzed by indicating themes and points that resulted in supporting the quantitative data. Moreover, this chapter represents the results of the current study answering the following research questions: i) What is the level of classroom participation among students in the English Department of Laghman University-Afghanistan?; ii) To what extent does the intensity of the two factors affect students' oral participation at the English department of Laghman University-Afghanistan?

3.1. Demographic information of the respondents

The respondents who participated in this study were 110 male students. They are from four different classes: freshmen (26.4%), sophomore (20%), junior (23.6%), and the senior students (30%). Besides, most of the respondents aged between 20 to 25 with an average experience of using English for five years.

3.2. Level of oral participation among students

This section answers the first research question of this study, the level of oral participation among students at the English Department of Laghman University. The following are the results of both the questionnaire and interview data. Table 2 indicates the students' level of classroom participation. Most of the students voluntarily commented in the class (61.3%), and they take part in the discussion (57.1%) as well as the answer to the questions asked by the instructors in the classroom (54.4%). Whereas, students' level of participation is affected when they come to the class unprepared coming to the classroom, and not doing their assignment or reading the lesson (60.5%), and they also stay passive for the whole class period (51.5%). Furthermore, it is revealed that students' orally participation (48.7%), making questions in the classroom (47.8%), and present presentation (43.6%) are below the average level. Table 3 shows the responses obtained from the semi-structured interview from the respondents to support the data from the questionnaire.

Table 2. Level of oral participation

No	Statements	Percentage	Mean
1.	How often did you comment on voluntary comments in the class?	61.3%	3.06
2.	How often do you come to class unprepared, for example, without completing the assignment and/or reading?	60.5%	3.03
3.	How often do you take part in the classroom discussion?	57.1%	2.85
4.	When your instructor as a question in the class, how often did you volunteer an answer?	54.4%	2.72
5.	In your class, how often do you remain silent for the whole class period?	51.5%	2.57
6.	In your class, how often did you participate orally?	48.7%	2.44
7.	How often do you ask questions in the class?	47.8%	2.39
8.	How often do your present a given task in the classroom as a leader of your group?	43.6%	2.18

Table 3. Responses from the participants

Respondent	Response
Respondent 1	<i>"Yes. Fortunately, I always participate in each period of the class because it is essential for the enhancement of my ability and courage. Sometimes, I participate in the classroom by asking any questions that I do not know, face problems, or I don't understand any ideas or topics discussed during the lesson".</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"Yes. Sometimes I participate. But not all the time. I take part in debate and discussion, which is conducted in the classroom..."</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"I always participate in the classroom. Sometimes I voluntarily participate in the classroom by raising my hand to add my own ideas about any issue that has been taught and discussed by the teachers ..."</i>
Respondent 4	<i>"Yes. I participate. I always try to answer questions of instructors while directing in the classroom because this is the best way of communication inside the classroom. I also comment and share my opinion in the class, but at the begging of my learning stage, I could not speak up in the classroom because I had a lack of vocabulary and speaking skills, but now, I am very good..."</i>
Respondent 5	<i>"...I also comment and share my opinion in the class, but at the beginning of my learning stage, I could not speak up in the ..."</i>

In contrast, Table 3 indicates the findings from the semi-structured interview about first research question revealed that most of the students are interested in oral participation in the classroom (Respondents 1, 2, 3, and 5). Indeed, oral participation is essential for enhancing students' achievement, and often prefer to participate in each period of classroom activities, discussion, and debates. Sometimes, raising their hand to add extra ideas about any topic and ask questions that they do not know during the lesson (Respondents 1, 2, and 3). Respondent 4 replied that he was passive at the beginning of the semester due to a lack of vocabulary, confidence, and fluency in the language. However, after a while, he defeated the mentioned problems and now usually participates in the classroom, particularly raising his hand to participate in the lessons or when the instructor is directing any question in the classroom.

3.3. Factors affecting classroom participation

This section answers the second research question of the study. As can be seen in Table 4, the most dominant factors that affected oral participation of the students are the class-size related factors and teachers related factors. It is in line with the study conducted by Khatun [39].

Table 4. Factors affecting classroom participation

No	Factor	Frequency
1	Classroom size factor that affects classroom participation	67.56%
2	Teachers' related factor affecting classroom participation	60.00%

3.3.1. Classroom size factors that affect oral participation

This section describes the result from the questionnaire about the class-size related factor affect classroom participation. As can it can be observed from the overall percentage in the Table 5, and the class-size factor is graded as the highest factor affecting the level of participation among students at the English Department of Laghman University. Table 5 reveals the descriptions of classroom size-related factor obtained from the questionnaire.

Table 5. Classroom-size related factor

No	Statements	Percentage	Mean
16.	I prefer to study in a small class	72.8%	3.64
17.	I think the seating system of my classroom is effective for classroom participation	71.6%	3.58
18.	I think that in the large classroom teacher does not pay attention equally to the students	71%	3.55
19.	I think a greater number of students in the classroom distract me	69%	3.45
20.	I think classroom interaction is restricted only to the students who are seated in the first row	69%	3.45
21.	I think it takes too much time if every student is required to speak up in the classroom	67.6%	3.38
22.	I think it is difficult not to organize group work in the crowded class	67.6%	3.38
23.	I think the teachers cannot control the large classroom due to much noise	64%	3.20
24.	In large classes, the teacher cannot see his/her students' progress	62.2%	3.11
25.	In large classes, students are demotivated	60.8%	3.04

Based on the data from the Table 5, most of the students prefer to study in the small classes (72.8%), the seating arrangement in the classroom also affected their oral participation (71.6%), teachers cannot pay equal attention to students (71%), and students who are seated at the front rows can usually participate in the classroom, (69%). Furthermore, students are demotivated due to too much noise in the classroom (60.8%), there is very limited time to for students to speak up (62.2%), and teachers cannot see improvement of their students in the large classrooms (62.2%).

Table 6 shows data driven from the semi-structured interview to give further insights to the quantitative data. This table reveals the findings from semi-structured interview revealed that most of the students were interested in studying in the small classrooms, one of the interviews replied that small classes could provide us equal opportunities for of participation, communication, and taking part in the group discussion and present a presentation. However, all of the interviewees replied that noises, whispering of students, and bad weather cause them to be passive in the classroom. It is also indicated that in the crowded classroom, teacher pay attention to only a few students who are already better in language skills and communication, and the remaining of them stay passive and demotivated in the large classrooms (Respondents 4 and 5).

Table 6. Responses of participants about the class-size related factor

Respondent	Response
Respondent 1	<i>"I want to study in the small classes because there are equal opportunities for learners to participate, communicate, and take part in the discussion and present presentation. Besides, there is a time limitation that we cannot participate in the classroom, and teachers cannot implement turn-taking; that's why most of the students stay passive."</i>
Respondent 2	<i>"...Noise can negatively impact the classroom participation, and there are too much whispering and noise of chairs in the classroom, and we cannot confidently talk and discussion."</i>
Respondent 3	<i>"...In crowded classes, the teacher only sees a few student's improvements. I see many students play games on their mobile phones and don't care about the teachers and their lesson and vice versa, the teachers also."</i>
Respondent 4	<i>"In crowded classes, teacher cannot motivate their students. If there were small classes, every student would be motivated for oral participation."</i>
Respondent 5	<i>"...Some of the students who are intelligent and good in their language skill, and some of the teachers do let them talk. That's why good students are demotivated. Also, most of the students in large classes cannot be motivated."</i>

3.3.2. Teachers' related factors affecting oral participation

Table 7 shows the teacher's related factor that affected the oral participation of students and was ranked as the second affective factors. Based on the table, most of the students' oral participation is affected when the teacher negatively evaluates them (72.4%) and does not utilize a student-centered learning approach when teaching students (63.8%). The statement "*Teacher does not follow turn-taking but only let a few students to interact in the classroom*" also affected students' oral participation (62.5%), and the average level of students' oral participation is also affected by the teacher's unfriendly behavior (58.9%). Whereas, teachers' attention toward students' language was considered to be the least significant in affecting their oral participation (46.9). It followed by the statement in which the student feels nervous when talking with their teachers, and they do not understand their students (54.9%; 58.8%).

Table 7. Teacher's related factor

No	Statements	Percentage	Mean
26.	The teacher negatively evaluates me	72.4%	3.61
27.	The teacher uses a teacher-centered approach in the classroom; therefore, I am passive in the classroom	63.8%	3.19
28.	Teacher does not follow turn taking but only let a few students to interact in the classroom	62.5%	3.12
29.	The teacher unfriendly attitudes in the classroom causes destruction.	58.9%	2.94
30.	I remained silent because I am afraid to make mistakes and look unintelligent.	58.7%	2.93
31.	I get upset because my teacher cannot understand me then I remain silent	55.6%	2.78

Table 8 shows the responses obtained from the interview in order to support ideas from the quantitative data. The table shows that teachers also affected students' oral participation. Respondents 2 and 5 replied that teachers who are well qualified or holding a master's degree and are well experienced they engage students in the classroom activities. While, Respondents 1, 3, and 4 replied that teachers who use the teacher-centered learning (TCL) approach put them into passive and considered it as the most influential factor. Bachelor's degree lecturers and contract-based lectures also hinder classroom participation. Furthermore, Respondents 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 replied that they are negatively affected when teachers negatively evaluated. Moreover, teacher's behavior, for example, using threatening words as feedback, being pessimistic, and boldfaced during the whole class made students be passive in the classroom.

Table 8. Responses of participant about class-size related factors

Respondent	Response
Respondent 1	"Teachers do not pay attention to our communication; instead, they are using traditional teaching methods in which only use focus on their lecture and avoid involving students in the activities."
Respondent 2	"Some of the teachers are weak or even contract based-lecturers; they always do not pay attention to our communication. That's why we do not talk next time."
Respondent 3	"Unfortunately, some of the teacher' who are not talented or having bachelor degree they do not pay attention to our communication and only focus on those students who are always active and good in communication".
Respondent 3	"Sometimes, if I make mistakes when speaking in the classroom, the teacher uses bad words as feedback, which hurt me...."
Respondent 4	"Yes. Some of the teachers are boldfaced, unfriendly behavior, and look nervous whenever I make a mistake when speaking, and they make me annoyed when insulting my language use."
Respondent 4	"Yes. Some of the teachers are pessimistic in nature and they do not care what we are doing or saying. Once I was presenting a presentation and I passed the presentation with its rule and regulation. But, at the end of the presentation, the teachers pointed all the negative points of my presentation that's why I became very demotivated and next time I avoided myself to present a presentation in his period."
Respondent 5	"Yes. Now a day's most of the instructor are Masters' Degree holder and are improved in their teaching styles that's why we are very pleased because everybody can communicate in the classroom..."

4. DISCUSSION

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to explore the two factors affecting students' oral participation among the students in the English Department of Laghman University in Afghanistan. Particularly, to examine students' level of oral participation, teachers-related, and classroom size-related factors affected the oral participation of students. Data were collected through an online survey questionnaire from one hundred and ten respondents and a semi-structured interview from five randomly respondents. The findings of this study revealed that the most influential factors that affected the students' oral participation were classroom size-related, and teachers' related factors, respectively. The following is a discussion and interpretation of this study based on each research question.

4.1. Students' level of oral participation

The findings revealed from the questionnaire and semi-structured interview that classroom participation is below the average level among students at the English Department of Laghman University. The data from the findings also indicated that most of the students are interested in oral participation; they commonly showed their participation by voluntarily commenting and raising their hands to answer questions asked in the classroom. Such techniques might be a traditional way of interacting in the classroom that rooted back from their school level. In line with answering questions to the teacher, Khatun [39] asserted that the quality of oral participation is influenced by the instructors' questioning strategy. Furthermore, the majority of students orally participate in the classroom discussion, debate, and giving a presentation in the classroom, and such participation might be due to their background studies, or the way they are taught at school. Taking part in the discussion is important, since Singh *et al.* [40] declared that if students participation is observed in the discussion, they are making themselves accustomed to the use of the English language. They are also picking language structure to become more efficient speakers in the classroom through which students' participation is optimized.

Furthermore, the findings disclosed that most of the students are attending the class unprepared and not reading their lesson, not doing their assignment, lacking strong language skills, and self-confidence avoided them to be passive in the classroom. Such problems might be rooted in the faculty that they may not enforce the rules and regulations of the university for fulfilling the assignments or coming to the class unprepared, or sometimes the parents and social motivation can also cause them to be inactive in the classroom. Similarly, these findings have resembled with Reisman *et al.* [41], they claimed that preparation is an effective strategy used by the students before coming to the class to part in the discussion actively. For example, before coming to class, students are required to perform some reading and make some notes. Also, a limited number of students write down some questions to be asked during the lesson. According to previous researchers [42], preparation assists students in understanding the lessons better; it also activates them to possess ideas on what to contribute during the classroom discussion.

4.2. Factors affecting oral participation

The second research question of this study was the two factors affecting the oral participation of students at the English Department of Laghman University. After scrutinizing the results of the study, it has been observed that the most dominant factors that affected the students' oral participation ranged from class-size and, teacher factors accordingly.

4.3. Class size related factors

The number of students in the class is a significant factor in a physical setting that impacts the behaviors of both teachers and students [43]. It is hard to teach and manage the over large classes, which are concerned as a factor that hinders the provision of a stimulating classroom environment in which learners can be taught successfully [44]. It is revealed that the average number of students in each class in the English Department at Laghman University is more than 60 asserted that teachers are unable to control the noise and pay equal attention to the learner's performance and language use. Usually, students who are seated in the front rows typically take part in the classroom activities, but the rest of them stay passive. In line with, findings of Clemes *et al.* [3] revealed that students who had lower participation frequency were seated at the back of the classroom than those seated in other parts of the class. There was no reason behind their seating position but only avoiding themselves from oral participation.

In addition, it has been found that students' oral participation is affected due to too much noise in their classrooms. For instance, whispering, the sound of chairs, and lousy weather caused students to be silent in the classroom. It obvious if the number of students per class is more than fifty, then teaching and learning might be very difficult due to too much noise, arrangement, and weather. Similarly, a study revealed, students may lose their confidence in a noisy and crowded class, and the way they practice the language doing group works, and presenting presentations are affected in it. These findings resemble the results of Abebe and Deneke [45], they discovered that there is less degree of oral participation in the large classes. The students have fewer chances of making questions or commenting in classes where there is more than average.

4.4. Teachers' related factors

In this study, it has been found the teachers' related factor was ranked the second factor in affecting students' oral participation. It is reported that the teachers' approach, behavior, and qualification have affected students' oral participation. The data from the findings revealed that students' oral participation is affected when teachers negatively evaluate them or using threatening language as feedback. The negative evaluation of students is due to the dominancy of teachers in the classroom in the Afghani context. Therefore, most of the students do not dare to speak up confidently in front of teachers in the classroom. Similarly, fear

of being criticized and humiliated in front of peers is one of the detriments associated with the students' unwillingness to participate in the classroom discussion [46]. Learners' fear of evaluation and fear of correctness of speech reduced their willingness to communicate in English as foreign language (EFL) classes. Similarly, the teacher's role is affecting the students' interaction in the classroom [47].

Furthermore, most of the students' oral participation is affected by the teachers' teaching approach. Indeed, teachers who did not implement student-centered learning (SCL) approach and its relevant techniques, for example, the group works, discussion, presentation, and turn-taking caused students to show declination in oral participation. These findings are in line with a study conducted by Sert and Walsh [48], they found that the teachers' approach can affect students' participation in the classroom discussion in which students' participation is low when teachers are dominant in the classroom. Also, workshop-based lessons and arranging small groups could actively increase the possibilities of learning in the classroom.

Besides, students' oral participation is affected when they do not follow turn-taking in the classroom. Students believed that the teacher only let a few students who are seated in the front rows to take part in the lesson or communicate in the classroom, and the rest of the students stay silent every day. In such a situation, students do not find the opportunity of speaking in the classroom. Previous study showed that turn-taking in participation essential technique of the teaching-learning process that engages students in the classroom. A study conducted by Buddin and Zamarro [49] revealed that there is less attention to turn-taking in the class because most of the time, only intelligent student raise their hand to participation and the rest of the neglect from oral participation.

Additionally, data from the interview revealed that teachers who are bachelor degree holders or possess limited pedagogical experience have also negatively affected students' oral participation. Regarding the qualification of the teacher as a study indicated that teacher quality is a critical element of student academic success, but few specific teacher characteristics influence classroom outcomes [47], [48]. The majority of the permanent teachers are pursuing their further studies abroad. Instead of them, university administration employed contract-based lecturers. They possess fewer teaching experiences, and command on their subject caused students to be passive in the classroom. In this regard, the negative results on students learning of hiring contract-based teachers can be detrimental to students' performance in the long run [39].

Ministry of Higher Education of Afghanistan should oblige teachers to implement student-centered learning (SCL) approach and relevant technique, including, for conducting workshop-based classes, presentations, discussions, debates, group works to enhance students' interaction. Furthermore, Ministry of Higher Education should reconsider decreasing the number of student admission in a class, which can significantly help to improve students' oral participation, and teachers may implement a student-centered learning approach in the classroom. In addition, teachers should employ technology-based instruction in engaging students in classroom activities, discussions, presentations, and debates. Teachers are suggested to make the teaching environment friendly to improve student participation in the classroom and provide them opportunities to take part in assignments, group works, presentations, and discussions in the classroom. Moreover, parents should motivate their offspring to communicate in front of elders at the home, village, or even at school and let them speak everywhere to enhance their confidence in speaking. Once a student is motivated to speak confidently, then they can comfortably communicate and discuss the educational matter with their teachers, peers, and classmates, and become a successful student in the future.

This research had some limitations. The first limitation was the selection of the sample size, which was only students from the English Department of Laghman University. More ideas and insight could be gained if a greater number of students from different departments and faculties were sampled, and data could be easily generalized to a larger sample. In this study, an online survey questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used as the main data gathering tools. An observation tool could bring in in-depth and real-life problems of students about their oral participation, due to time limitation and access to the setting and participant it was not conducted.

5. CONCLUSION

The overall findings of this study revealed the students' level of classroom participation is below the average level. Students usually voluntarily comment, replying to the questions directed in the classroom, and share their opinions about any issue. In contrast, most of the students are extremely interesting in oral participation, but the increasing number of students avoid their participation. Moreover, students' participation is affected when they come to the class unprepared by not doing their assignment or read their lesson before coming to the class. Significantly, students' oral participation was affected by the class-size related factor. It has resulted that a greater number of students in the classroom caused them to be passive, and therefore, they prefer to study in the small classrooms. Indeed, the current number of students in each class at the department of Laghman University is more than 60; therefore, most of the student oral participation is affected by this.

Teachers' related factor was also the second factor that affected students' oral participation. Usually, students' oral is affected when the teachers negatively evaluated them or used threatening language as feedback. Most of the students' oral participation is affected by the teachers' teaching approach. Indeed, teachers who did not implement student-centered learning (SCL) approach in the classroom and its relevant techniques such as group works, discussion, presentation, and turn-taking. Besides, students' oral participation is affected when teachers do not follow turn-taking in the classroom. Students believed that the teacher only let a few students who are seated in the front rows to take part in the lesson or communicate in the classroom, and the rest of the students stay silent every day. Data from the interview revealed that teachers who are bachelor degree holders or possess limited pedagogical experience have also negatively affected students' oral participation.

Future studies can conduct all on eastern universities of Afghanistan to find out in-depth ideas of factors affecting practices of oral participation among students. A comparative study can be conducted to find out differences among students' level of engagement from two or three universities in the different parts of Afghanistan. Besides, future researchers may use the observational study to explore factors affecting the oral participation of the students.




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